

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Big Picture Education Australia conducted a review of the Design For Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this project was to determine the impact of physical distancing and social isolation associated with school closure on students (“Learning From Home” survey) and advisors (Making A Difference” survey). The surveys investigated the Big Picture Design for Learning (learning outcomes and student engagement), relationships within the Big Picture community, and student and advisor well-being.

KEY FINDINGS

Responses indicate that students from Big Picture made the transition to Learning From Home effectively. Overall, this was largely attributed to The Design itself. The flexibility and adaptability of the Big Picture Design For Learning necessitated very few modifications to student learning for the transition to Learning From Home. Students are engaged in personalised learning projects and are not restricted by a prescribed curriculum. Big Picture students are organised and prepared and demonstrate an ability to learn independently. Advisors understand what learning strategies work best for each student to learn. Students have an established, ongoing personalised relationship with their advisor and feel a strong sense of connection with their advisory. Importantly, this relationship extends to the student’s family, and communication between advisors and parents was shown to be critical in creating a collaborative and supportive learning environment for each student. The building and maintenance of these relationships was considered the most important factor while Learning From Home. Most evident in responses from advisors is the authentic and genuine commitment they have to their students. Providing support, reassurance and consistency for students in order to maintain connections while utilising new technology and digital platforms, was shown to be valuable and essential to ensuring students’ well-being.

This situation obviously posed challenges for students and advisors. Big Picture students demonstrated the ability to deal with challenges, as well as identify strategies to seek support. It appears Big Picture students recognise the need to maintain balance for their physical and mental health. The personal qualities of Big Picture students, such as resilience, empathy and self-appraisal, contributed to their ability to adjust and cope in the circumstances. Furthermore, great leadership and support from colleagues provide a network for advisors to maintain their own well-being amid the demands of the current situation.

The lock down posed specific concerns for those students usually engaged in LTI’s and outlearning, those with a difficult home life (families experiencing financial hardship or mental health problems during COVID-19), those with particular personality traits, and those in their final year of school.

CONCLUSION

This review suggests the Big Picture Design For Learning may provide opportunities for students in the broader educational community. Big Picture students demonstrated they were motivated and equipped to deal with change during the COVID-19 lock down. This was primarily due to the Big Picture Design For Learning and the dedication of advisors to ensure the ongoing connection and engagement of their students while Learning From Home.

A follow up survey is currently being conducted to provide insight into the experience once students return to school.